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Commission for Social Development
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Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups

Statement submitted by American Psychological Association and International Council of Psychologists, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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Statement

1. This 45th Session of the Commission for Social Development will initiate the first review and appraisal of the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, a major milestone in bringing ageing issues to the forefront of the international agenda. We have been pleased that over the past five years many governments have undertaken actions to achieve the objectives set forth in the Madrid Plan. However, given the inexorable demographic revolution that has begun and will affect all nations as their populations age, much more needs to be done. With the number of persons age 60 and older expected to quadruple between 2000 and 2050 to nearly 2 billion, it is critical that we recognize that specific actions must be taken by governments to ensure that the goals of the Madrid Plan are achieved worldwide.

2. We recognize and support the need for flexibility in addressing the Plan's goals, not only from country to country but also within countries, understanding that each nation faces different opportunities and challenges and must, therefore, set different priorities. But whatever path is taken, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing must remain the fundamental blueprint. Its goals must be every nation's goals.

3. To this end, we believe that is critical that all governments support the development of the "bottom-up" approach to assessing the specific needs of older persons in their societies, designing policies and programs to meet those needs, and then appraising the effectiveness of those actions. We urge that the establishment of partnerships among governments, non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector, with significant participation of older persons, be an integral component of this process.

4. To assist countries lacking the internal capacity to implement either the Madrid Plan or this review process, we recommend that sufficient funding of the UN Trust Fund for Ageing be made to expand the capability of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to provide such assistance as is requested.

5. With respect to the theme of this 45th Session, "full employment and decent work for all", we wish to remind governments that when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares, "Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment", older persons are included in "Everyone" and that one key objective of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing is "Employment opportunities for all older persons who want to work." Realistically, this will only come to pass when nations and regions mainstream ageing in their development and poverty eradication strategies. We call upon all governments to mainstream ageing not just in this area but in all their social and economic policies and programs.

6. Ultimately it is governments that must act on the commitments they make at international conferences. This was affirmed by the 166 Member States attending the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid five years ago in Article 17 of their Political Declaration in which they recognized

their "primary responsibility for providing leadership on ageing issues". We in the NGO community stand ready to assist you in implementing the Madrid Plan and this review and appraisal process.

7. **Finally, we ask that you recall a statement made at the 43rd Session of this Commission: "The potential for older persons is a powerful basis for future development – enabling society to rely increasingly on the skills, experience and wisdom of older persons not only to take the lead in their own betterment but also to participate actively in that of society as a whole."**

Note:

Statement submitted on behalf of the NGO Committee on Ageing, an international network of more than 60 organizations working to raise world awareness of the opportunities and challenges of global ageing.